



City of San Antonio

Veterans Affairs Commission

Volume V, Issue I

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Mission Statement

The Veterans Affairs Commission will serve as the community's liaison and advocate for veterans affairs; advise the City Council on issues affecting San Antonio Veterans and their families; and make recommendations for improving services.

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
Support Staff

Chairman's Message— by Erik Frederick



ERIK FREDERICK, CHAIR
Veterans Affairs Commission (VAC)

Left: Mayor Phil Hardberger & Councilman Roger Flores meet VAC Chair, Vice Chair and members at February's Mtg.

First, I would like to take the opportunity to express my gratitude to all of my fellow commission members. As a young veteran, it is humbling to know that they trust me to lead the commission after they have built a great foundation. I know that together we will all continue to work hard for the veterans of our great community. I would like to take the opportunity to introduce myself.

My name is Erik Frederick and I represent District 4. I served in the Army from 1990 until 1997. I served a six-month combat tour in Somalia and a six-month counter-narcotics tour in Colombia, South America. My family is rich with military history including my Uncle Joseph Leborgne who served in WWII, Korea and Vietnam with the United States Army. I have many combat and non-combat veterans in my family. I understand the importance of needing a representative.

I feel that our community of veterans is at a challenging point in history. We continue to work hard for the aging veterans of WWII, Korea and Vietnam. It is as important as ever that we ensure these great veterans receive the support and respect that they have so rightfully earned through their service.


At the same time, we are experiencing a rapid increase in the number of young combat veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. These service members will truly need the entire community's support as they travel home. Even before they return, they must know that we are here supporting their efforts.

As well, we cannot forget the thousands of non-combat veterans that are living in San Antonio. All of the men and women who have worn the uniform of the United States military deserve the opportunity to prosper and succeed.

The Veterans Affairs Commission is here to ensure that all veterans in our city have a voice in the community. I speak for all of my fellow commissioners when I say that we are honored to serve each and every one of our great veterans. ■

Supporting Our Troops

Purple Heart Vehicle License Plates — Submitted by Roy E. Lee, USA, Ret., Vice Chair

 Officials at every level of government (elected and appointed) proclaim their concern for American Veterans in general, especially those who are KIA, WIA, POW and/or Disabled. High dollar, profile, visibility and often controversial programs are proposed, knowing they will garner Headlines for a brief period and join other sick dying and/or dead issue not to be addressed again until there is a need to be in the Headlines/Spot Light.

There is every indication the Texas Legislature has an interest in doing something for veterans who have served this country. If that is the case, there is one thing that can be done that will benefit an increasing number of veterans. What? You may ask! Modify the stature on Special Automobile License Plates as it pertains to veterans who have earned and been awarded the Purple Heart.

Currently, the Texas State Stature authorizes a veteran with proper support documentation to obtain Purple Heart Automobile License Plates for \$3.00, paid directly to Texas Department of Transportation (TXDot) who issue the plates and annual renewals.

If the veteran owns two (2) vehicles (Car and Truck), a second set of Purple Heart Plates may be obtained for \$15.00 paid directly to TXDot. However, the plates are issued by TXDot via the County Tax Assessor/Collector Office, as are renewals.

The County Tax Assessor/Collector Office requires the veteran to pay an additional amount (going rate for the vehicle weight class). In my case, \$72.30 for the car. This is tantamount to paying TXDot \$15.00 for nothing! The result is a veteran paying \$15.00 more for a second set of Purple Heart Plates than it would have cost for standard plates.

I have addressed this matter with Bexar County Tax Assessor/Collector Office, Texas Department of Transportation (TXDot), Senator Frank Madla, Senate District 19, P.O. Box 12068, Austin, Texas 78711, Senator Judith Zaffirina, Senate District 21, P.O. Box 12068, Austin, Texas 78711, Senator Leticia Van Deputte, Senate District 26, P.O. Box 12068, Austin, Texas 78711, Representative Robert R. Puente, House District 119, P.O. Box 2910, Austin, TX 78768 and Representative Ruth Jones McClendon, House District 120, P.O. Box 2910, Austin, TX 78768.

The reply from TXDot and the Bexar County Tax Assessor/Collector Office was that what is being done is in accordance with the stature. Rep. Ruth Jones McClendon and others listed above replied indicating the matter will be reviewed and possibly addressed during the next session.

This is an area that is low key, does not lend itself to grandstanding, but impacts every veteran who has been awarded the Purple and desire Purple Heart Plates for their second vehicle. Thanks to the War on Global Terrorism, the number is increasing rapidly.

I don't think this is what the legislature intended. If that is the case, a review should result in an administrative correction of the stature to achieve the intended results. Except as it impacts the budget, \$15.00 per veteran will not solve the School Funding Issue. This does not warrant a delay for a full session Legislature.

If this matter is of interest to you, it may help if you contact your elected officials. ■

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

| | | | |
|-----------|--|-----------|---|
| Event: | All American Armed Forces Parade | Event: | Treating our Returning Soldiers: What We Need to Know |
| Date: | Saturday, May 20, 2006 | Date: | Monday, April 24—Tuesday, April 25, 2006 |
| Time: | 7:30 p.m. | Time: | 5:00 p.m. — 12:30 p.m. |
| Location: | Starts at Avenue E & 3rd Street San Antonio, TX | Location: | South Texas Veterans Health Care System Auditorium, 2nd Floor 7400 Merton Minter Blvd. San Antonio, TX 78284 |

City Supports Military Transformation Task Force — by Walter Ague

The City recently joined Bexar County and the local business community, through the Greater San Antonio Chamber of Commerce, in establishing the Military Transformation Task Force (MTTF). The Task Force is modeled on, and is a follow-on to the highly successful Defense Transformation Task Force that led the City's and County's effort to protect the various military missions and installations in the greater San Antonio area.

The Task Force is headed up by three (3) Tri-Chairs, District 4 City Councilman Richard Perez, who also serves as the Chairman of the City Council Military Affairs Council, County Commissioner Lyle Larson, and Mike Novak representing the Great SA Chamber of Commerce. There are seven (7) committees and an Executive Committee. The Executive Committee has now met three times and received briefings on the current status of BRAC 2005 alignments in San Antonio. In addition, several of the committees have received in-depth briefings at Fort Sam with other meetings scheduled at Lackland and Randolph AFBs.

It is anticipated that a number of neighborhood and community meetings are going to be necessary given the impacts on the areas surrounding each installation. Members of the Veterans Affairs Commission are invited to attend these meetings and will be informed when they are scheduled. For more detailed information, please feel free to contact Walter Ague, Special Projects Manager, Economic Development Department, at 207-6566. ■

San Antonio Hosts Veterans Disability Benefits Commission — by Karen S. Rankin

There were 200 people that welcomed the Veterans Disability Benefits Commission (VDBC) to San Antonio Monday evening, 6 March 2006. The VDBC was formed after a congressional debate about concurrent receipt in the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2004. The hearing was held at the Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center.

Three members of the Commission attended the meeting which was the second of eight which will be held around the country in locations in which there are large concentrations of retired military or surviving spouses. The purpose of the VDBC is *to carry out a study of the benefits under the laws of the United States that are provided to assist veterans and their survivors for disabilities and deaths attributable to military service*. VDBC Commission members attending included William M. Matz, Jr., MG USA (Ret), Ken Jordan, Col. USMC (Ret), and James Terry Scott, LTG, USA (Ret) Commission Chair, General Matz chaired the hearing.

The Commission has been sincere about conducting a full and fair review, and all in attendance were encouraged by their willingness to listen and consider varying points of view. ●

One Stop for Jobs— by Karen S. Rankin

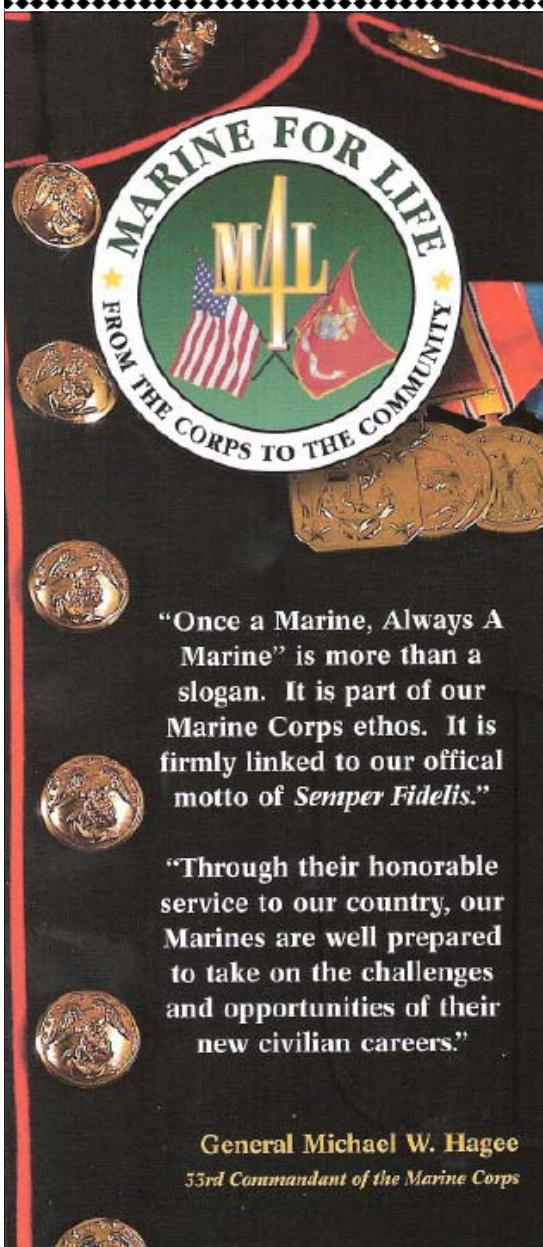


Military personnel and veterans will receive wallet-sized cards and key charms with critical employment and job-training information in the next few months, according to the U.S. Department of Labor. The card will be attached to a brochure for demobilizing and transitioning service members as they go through the joint Labor Department, VA and DoD Transition Assistance Program. For veterans who already have made the transition, additional information and professional staff guidance will be available at the nearly 3,500 One-Stop Career Centers nationwide.

For more information, call (877) US2-jobs (872-5627) or visit www.servicelocator.org to locate a One-Stop Career Center. ●

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Marine for Life — by Major Matt Stuckey



The Marine For Life Program's mission is to provide sponsorship for our Marines who honorably leave active service and return to civilian life in order to nurture and sustain the positive, mutually beneficial relationships inherent in the Corps' ethos, "Once A Marine, Always A Marine."

The Program is manned by drilling reservists or non-active duty Marines. These Marines are called Hometown Links (HTL's). They refer transitioning Marines (TM's) to sources of information, contacts and opportunities, to include: 1) employment opportunities and interview preparation, 2) housing, 3) education, 4) veterans' benefits, 5) financial planning, and 6) special needs. Those contacts, who can make direct hiring decisions or who can directly influence hiring processes, are called network resources (NR's). Those contacts, who cannot make or influence hiring decisions, but who can provide help in other ways (as noted above), are called mentors. No guarantees are made, but a due diligence effort is always made to assist the TM's.

The HTL's build their network of NR's and mentors by tapping into the community to leverage support from former Marines and/or Marine-friendly employers and agencies. They also coordinate with agencies such as the Marine Corps League and the Noncommissioned Officers Association. The Program has an HTL in every major metropolitan location in the country; in total, there are about 110 HTL's.

The keystone to the Program is the Marine For Life website (www.m4l.usmc.mil). The website contains all the information the HTL's have to offer TM's. After registering with their respective HTL, mentors and NR's can – free of charge – post their contact information and company description on the site, post job openings, browse resumes posted by TM's, and have job opening information emailed to all TM's registered with the site. Likewise, TM's can – again for free – use the site to build their resumes, post their resumes for viewing by NR's and mentors, search job openings posted by NR's, browse contact information posted by NR's and mentors, and find helpful weblinks on a wide array of useful information, including benefits, spousal employment, and education opportunities.

The Program groups TM's into two categories: Personally Served and Self-served. Personally Served TM's are those who fall within a designated time-frame relative to their separation date, post their resume to the website, and remain in contact with their HTL on a regular basis. Personally Served TM's receive personal case management from their HTL. Self-served TM's are those Marines who do not meet the stipulations listed above for Personally Served TM's; they retain full access to all the website's tools and resources on a self-served basis.

Every year, approximately 27,000 honorably discharged Marines transition from the Corps to the civilian sector. The San Antonio and the South TX Marine For Life Program receives anywhere from 30 to 60 TM's a month. The San Antonio / South TX HTL is Major Matt Stuckey. His network includes eighteen employers and dozens of mentors. Additionally, Major Stuckey arranges hiring/networking luncheons approximately every four months, wherein he gets employers and TM's together to exchange contact information regarding employment opportunities. These luncheons are held at El Mirador Restaurant just south of downtown San Antonio. Anyone interested in contributing to the Program as an NR or mentor should contact Major Stuckey @ 210-389-5055 or matt.stuckey@m4l.usmc.mil.

San Antonio Remembers by Carmelina Rocha Davis



PURPLE HEART MEDAL PRESENTATION

Mayor Phil Hardberger

Brigadier General David Rubenstein, Assistant Surgeon General for Force Sustainment

Councilwoman Patti Radle

In Honor of

Jesus Gonzales Vega



Bravery, courage, dedication and commitment were some of the words used to describe Jesus Gonzales Vega, a veteran of the Korean war who was presented the Purple Heart Medal on Friday, March 17th for receiving wounds in 1951, while engaging in heavy fire and grenade attacks with the North Koreans to protect his fellow soldiers. This transpired while attempting an assault on Hill 700 in the central Korean Mountain Range that came to be known as "Battle of Bloody Ridge."

Brigadier General David Rubenstein, Assistant Surgeon General for Force Sustainment, Fort Sam Houston, presented the Medal and the Citation to Mr. Vega, whose loving wife loyally stood at his side.



The ceremony opened with the presentation of the colors by the Fort Sam Houston Army Medical Department Center and School Color Guard, followed by a beautiful rendition of the National Anthem sung by Staff Sgt. Robin Farland. As the melody echoed in the City's Media Briefing Room and Mr. Vega stood proudly at attention, the moment defined his earlier words to staff, humbly stating that he did

The moment carried in Mayor Phil Hardberger's speech as he indicated that it was an honor to have heroes like Mr. Vega and from all wars, including those still serving, living in San Antonio, known to many as *Military City*. "I am proud to live in a city where patriotism is never out of fashion, where patriotism and service to country are prized, honored and valued," said Mayor Hardberger.



Brigadier General Rubenstein, spoke about the courage of a soldier, who despite the wounds received, was ready to return to his unit to serve with his friends, immediately after treatment.

As Mr. Vega is a very reserved, man, Nora Gonzales, the eldest of Mr. Vega's daughters, delivered a speech on behalf of the family. She indicated that her father had no expectations to be honored in such a way and expressed the pride that she and her family felt for her father. Various generations of the Vega family were present that day and we were fortunate to meet all of them during a private reception sponsored by the City's Veterans Affairs Commission (VAC). As Mr. Vega introduced each member of his family, it was evident that he was as proud of them as they were of him.

With the help of Richard Amaya, City Councilwoman Patti Radle, District 5, Fort Sam Houston, the City's Veterans Affairs Commission, and Economic Development Department staff, the presentation of this distinguished honor will be one that Mr. Vega and his family will always treasure. It will be especially significant because San Antonio remembered the valiant soldier who unselfishly sacrificed his life for others. ■



Photos Top down: Mr. Vega at attention; Mr. Vega shakes hands with Councilwoman Radle with Brig. Gen. Rubenstein, Mayor Hardberger and Mrs. Vega at side; B.G. Rubenstein shaking hands with Mr. Vega; Brig. Gen. Rubenstein presents citation to Mr. Vega with wife at side.

San Antonio Honors its Patriot Heroes— by Carmelina R. Davis



Event Photographer—Allee A. Wallace

There were 18 families present at the Patriot Award Ceremony held at the University of Texas Institute of Texan Cultures at San Antonio this past November 4th. The event was held in conjunction with local observances of Veterans Day. Mothers, fathers, sons and daughters alike were there to honor their loved ones who courageously gave their lives in the name of freedom.

The venue could not have been more appropriate as various photographs of heroes line the entrance walls of the facility. This day was set aside for new heroes, not only those who perished in the war, but for the families who sacrificed so much and who still endure the battle of their grief.

Phil Hardberger, the Mayor of the City of San Antonio, who has been touched by the loss of our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan and who has personally chosen to attend several funerals to extend his sympathies, welcomed and provided a few significant remarks to the families. Another significant icon representing the military was Lieutenant General Ricardo S. Sanchez, former Commanding General of V Corps, U.S. Army in Iraq. The speeches delivered by both significantly impacted the families, but they were especially moved by the poem entitled “A Soldier Cries” by General Sanchez, which he had previously delivered in Normandy in a Memorial Day tribute.

A silence fell over the room as everyone listened with anticipation to hear every word the General so eloquently and sensitively delivered. The poem reflected the agony a soldier must endure when leaving his loved ones behind, but knowing that his commitment lies in the honor and duty to his country.

Mr. Rojelio H. Garcia, then Chair for the Veterans Affairs Commission, read a citation on each hero, while the families approached the stage to receive a plaque and a Patriot Award Certificate presented by Mayor Hardberger and General Sanchez, respectively.

San Antonio Honors Its Patriot Heroes Cont'd.**Event Photographer—Allee A. Wallace**

A moment of silence was requested to reflect on our fallen heroes while “God Bless America”, a song by Celine Dion, echoed in the chamber. It was hard for many to fight back the tears as the words and the sweet harmony brought back the image of their beloveds.

The ceremony was followed by a private reception. This provided an opportunity for General Sanchez to visit one-on-one with the families. One particular encounter was very significant to the family of Pvt. Robbie Frantz, 19, who was killed in June 2003 by an insurgent's grenade in Baghdad. General Sanchez informed Mrs. Kim Smith that he remembered her son being under his command when he was killed. Mr. Federico Rangel, whose son was Air Force Staff Sgt. Ray Rangel, 29 and who drowned on February 13th trying to rescue soldiers from an overturned Humvee in Iraq, said that he felt proud to have the General present at the ceremony. Another father was heard to have said that while many have forgotten about the war, General Sanchez's presence and personal condolences made them feel that he knew each and every soldier that died under his command.

It was evident that everyone was touched by the momentous events that were coordinated by the Mayor's Office, the Veterans Affairs Commission, the Economic Development Department and the City Clerk's Office. The family's expressed their appreciation to Mayor Hardberger for the honor and distinction that San Antonio bestowed on its Patriot Heroes that day.

The Mayor and City Council, the Veterans Affairs Commission, and the City's Economic Development Department, in coordination with local military public affairs offices, developed the Patriot Award program to recognize military personnel and civilians (federal or private) from the metropolitan area who were killed, wounded, missing in action or prisoners of war during military operations in support of the global war on terrorism. ●



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FOR QUESTIONS OR TO BE ADDED TO THE MAILING LIST :

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Email: veterans@sanantonio.gov

***“Addressing Veterans Issues
in the Community”***

WE'RE ON THE WEB!
WWW.SANANTONIO.GOV/VETERANS



| | |
|--------------------------------|----------------|
| Erik Frederick Chair | District—4 |
| Roy Lee Vice Chair | District—2 |
| Richard P. Holgin | District—1 |
| Vacant | District—3 |
| Daniel Delgado | District—5 |
| Vacant | District—6 |
| Robert B. Robley | District—7 |
| Manuel S. Perez | District—8 |
| Karen S. Rankin | District—9 |
| Vacant | District—10 |
| Bob Murdock | District—Mayor |

Services & Information Web sites for Veterans

Texas Workforce Web Site

- Texas Workforce Commission (includes Governors Job Bank-State of Texas government jobs) — www.twc.state.tx.us

Government Job Search Web Sites
(Federal, County, City)

- Veterans information-how to apply for federal jobs — www.opm.gov/veterans/index.htm
- Army Civilian Personnel — www.cpol.army.mil
- City of S.A. Job site — www.sanantonio.gov/humres
- Bexar County Job site — www.co.bexar.tx.us

Nationwide Job Search Web Sites

- Nationwide job search — www.monster.com
- America's Job Bank (AJB) — www.ajb.dni.us

Other Job Search Sites

- Texas Employment Network — www.warmsprings.org/WSRC/TEN/index.html
- San Antonio Job Network — www.sajobnet.com
- Southwest Research Institute — www.swri.org
- UT Health Science Center — www.uthscsa.edu
- State of Texas — www.texasonline.com

Veterans' Information Web Sites

- Department of Veterans Affairs — www.va.gov
- Texas Veterans Land Board — www.glo.state.tx.us
- Texas Veterans Commission — www.tvc.state.tx.us
- Disabled American Veterans — www.dav.org

- Veterans of Foreign Wars — www.vfw.org
- The American Legion — www.legion.org
- National Veterans Organization — www.nvo.org
- National Veterans Legal Services Program — www.nvslp.org
- AMVETS — www.amvets.org
- NRC (request for records) — www.archives.gov
- The Retired Enlisted Association — www.trea.org
- Military Officers Association of America — www.moaa.org
- National Center for PTSD — www.ncptsd.org
- National Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve — www.esgr.org
- Gold Star Mothers of America — Guardiog@aol.com (Hilda B. Guardiola)
- Soldier & Family Assistance Center — Judith.markelz@samhouston.army.mil
- Marine for Life—Matt Stuckey, Maj. USMC — www.M4L.USMC.MIL — sanantonio@m41.usmc.mil

Veterans Job Search Web Sites

- A Veterans Employment & Resource Service — www.veteran.net
- Transition Assistance Online — www.taonline.com
- VFW Job Web site — www.vetjobs.com
- DOL Veterans' Reference Program — www.dol.gov